

The Cult Chronicles Part2: Lightning Strikes Twice

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Summary: Part two of the action-packed series crossing Mack Bolan with my own original team.

The Cult Chronicles Part2: Lightning Strikes Twice

Exodus Group Mission 6: Lightning Twice-Strikes The Freedmont Academy- New Castle, PA 10:22 A.M. EST

Bruce Lorone walked the girl and her father through the halls. Just like usual. The students were well behaved, the place was clean. The perfect place to educate a child. The resident program was especially popular. It was really the only program they offered. This was great! A private high-school. I bet those other idiots from the COTA hadn't thought this up. "What do you think honey?" The man said to his fourteen year old daughter. "I really like it. Can we afford it?" "Of course sweetie." He answered. Then, he turned to the headmaster. "This is fine. I think we have our decision." He told Lorone. Fate was sealed. There was no turning back. Together- they would once again venture into the depths of hell.

"The Crackpot" Restaurant/Bar- Towson, MD 12:34 P.M. EST

"This is a nice place you dug up here Paul." Chris Perry said as he swallowed a piece of lobster tail. Moreno had chose a pair of king crabs for his lunch. They provided a mallet for breaking the shells, but the Green Beret and master swordsman had brought a small folding knife to do the job. As the two enjoyed the exquisite seafood lunch, a commotion arose from the bar. A man said something loudly (the soldiers were too far away to hear what it was) and then a waitress squealed. Paul raised an eyebrow at his Ranger partner. "Livin' in a small mountain town, I'm a skilled veteran of all forms of bar brawl. Let's go." The two stood up and pushed their chairs in neatly. There was a divider between the bar and the eatery, so each man went around one side of the partition and did a quick recon. The problem seemed to be a scruffy looking drunkard--a regular probably--who's hands were getting impatient with one of the waitresses. He would "goose" her or made a lewd comment every time she walked by. Paul Moreno

initiated their little campaign. Chris--being the veteran of mountain bar fights--would only come in if things got hot. "Hey, man, chill." The Exodus blade expert said. The drunk just looked at him. The waitress walked by and passed a quick hand over her chest. "Hands off the lady!" The Green Beret said firmly. The drunk man stood up. "And what are you gonna do about it asshole?" The bar room went quiet. The waitress and the bartender looked at him. "Let's just say you'd regret it." The intoxicated patron grew angry. "NO, LET'S NOT JUST SAY ANYTHING! LET'S SETTLE IT BUDDY! MAN-TO-MAN!!!" He then proceeded to put up both fists in a flawed fighting stance. No one stood up to support him. Perry knew this would be short lived and sat back down to his lobster. Paul didn't react. Taking another opportunity to flaunt, the drunkard walked over to the waitress and grabbed her. She yelped as he slid both hands down her torso where they met at her crotch. She shoved him away while calling him a pervert. He began to mumble something but Paul drove his right knee swiftly into the back of the man's leg. He paused and fell to the ground- out cold. "How the hell'd you do that?!?" The bartender asked in amazement. "I shocked his femoral artery. He'll wake up in about 20 minutes. Very sober." Moreno answered. "Hey. . .wait a sec. . .you're that Beret I talked to a few weeks back. No wonder you did that so well. Want a free drink or somethin'?" He offered in thanks. "No, that's ok. But thank you for the offer." "An officer and a gentleman. Ooooooh." The subject of the fight--a waitress--said with a happy squeak. Now the Exodus fighter was able to take her in. She was about two to three inches shorter than he, had short blonde hair, light brown eyes and a beautiful smile. All hinted well by her southern Maryland twang. Had the soldier been a lesser controlled man, he might have taken the drunkard's strategy himself. Instead, he just bowed his head and walked away.

CIA Headquarters- Langley, VA 3:22 P.M. EST

"Here's the deal crew. Remember the cult you went after a few months back? They've resurfaced. It's only a small splinter of the original following though." Watkins began. Tom looked at him coldly. "It only takes a splinter to cause an infection John." John drooped a bit in depressing acknowledgment and continued. "Technically, this op is Bureau jurisdiction. Off the record, Christine Burchette is running the case and you'll probably be calling the shots anyway." "What plans do the Feds have?" Moreno asked. "They drop a deep cover operative into the academy for a week, pull the kid out and see what they can find out." "Sounds like the worst plan I've heard in a while. Who'd they blackmail into doing something like that." Perry inquired. Tom already knew the answer but let Watkins deliver it. "Melissa Windsor has volunteered to go into the academy." Vinson let out a low whistle and Luis Walker just shook his head. "Then what?" Gellar asked. "Gather all of the information you can on that school. Every entrance and exit and air duct and shitter. You're gonna run a joint raid with HRT to liberate those kids. If you can find out where any other cult members are hiding, then by all means, smash 'em like a fast ball through a window." John said, a tone of anger and patriotism in his voice at the same time. "Weapons?" Luis asked. "Sidearms for now. After you gather your info, fax me a list and you'll have your guns within 3 hours. Now get out of here. You have a plane to catch."

Dulles Airport- Washington D.C. 5:34 P.M. EST Christine Burchette stood at the terminal waiting anxiously as assorted passengers departed the plane. First to meet her glance was the tall Latino form

of Luis Walker. The man smiled brightly and gave her a warm embrace. Chris Perry said his hello's with ever-present mountain accent. Tall and lanky, Paul Moreno noticed his comrades massing around the FBI agent and followed their examples with a high five and a hello. Vinson Gibb was easily spotted, with his dark Afro-American complexion. She smiled as she remembered him bragging about his "ultimate tan". "Where's Gellar?" She asked. "He's on leave, not showin' up." Paul said, concealing his smile and desire to laugh. "Shut up asshole. I'm right here." The SEAL's sarcastic tone bellowed from the exit tunnel leading from the aircraft. "There you are." She said with happiness. The two met each other in mid-stride and embraced tightly while trading cheek kisses. The FBI agent and SEAL stood, relishing the moment while- "You guys do know that sex in public is illegal, right?" Moreno cut in sarcastically. The pair let each other go and began to needle their way through the busy airport. "What was that for?" Tom asked quietly into Paul's ear. "I figured I'd keep you in check until we can pass by a drug store or something." The Green Beret answered. Gellar furrowed his brow and cocked his head. With exasperation- Moreno pulled condom from his pocket and flicked it at the SEAL. "You're just sick. You know that?" Gellar said while trying to suppress his smile. "I saw that look in your eyes and the bulge in your crotch coming off that airplane." Paul said. "Is this thing still good? I mean, you've had it since high school and all." Tom said while raising one eyebrow. "Touche` comrade, Touche`." The Exodus swordsman said shaking his head. The team leader skipped a few steps ahead to come behind Christine. "Where is she?" he asked. "At home. Doesn't know you're coming. She thinks she'll be working with HRT, not Exodus." The agent replied. "Really?" Gellar more said than asked, imagining the look on her face.

Private Residence (Address Classified)- Alexandria, VA 6:45 P.M. EST

Christine Burchette placed the key into it's slot in the doorknob and pause. "Here, you do it in case she's standing there waiting for me." Accepting graciously, Tom Gellar turned the key gently and pushed the door open. All was quiet. The team tiptoed in stealthily. Moments later, the sound of footsteps sounded from upstairs. "You need help with tho-" Melissa Windsor stopped in mid-sentence when she saw Exodus group. She came down two steps at a time and ran into Gellar's arms. They hugged and exchanged friendly kisses. Chris bent over and received a hug from the girl also- the Ranger loved kids. Paul Moreno got a high-five. Walker got a kiss and the cheek and Vinson lifted her onto his shoulder.

7:06 P.M. EST

Everyone was settled in and reacquainted. Christine and Melissa had gone out to get dinner for the seven of them. "You see her room boss?" Moreno asked. "No, I didn't, and shut up. Not a word from you." Gellar snapped. "I was talking about Melissa's. Of course, if you're into the threesome stuff I can understand." Paul said, hardly containing his laughter. "What are we gonna do for the three days that she's in the school?" The Marine asked. "Plan. We'll recon the building, pull together blueprints and meet the guys from HRT." "Why did Hostage Rescue come into this anyway?" Gibb inquired. "Because unlike the ranch house in Arizona, a lot of these kids are yet to be fully brainwashed which is why they still have a chance and are considered hostages." Tom said. "I have an idea!" Perry spouted.

"What is it?" Moreno asked. "Boss, come with me." The Ranger immediately walked out the door. Tom trusted his men and walked out. "What was that about?" Walker said to the two team mates still there. "I got a hunch but I'm keepin' my mouth shut." Vin answered.

Gellar couldn't believe what he'd let Chris walk him into. They stood in front of the liquor store, which was--more than coincidentally--situated next door to a florist. "Go ahead. You pick out the wine and I'll grab her some flowers." Perry said with much enthusiasm. "You can't be serious." "Of course I am. Go, grab somethin- wait, he's another twenty, make it good." Chris almost ordered. Tom grabbed the twenty-dollar bill with exasperation and walked into the wine store. Chris went to the flower shop. A single white rose should do the trick. . . He thought to himself.

7:48 P.M. EST

"We're takin' off. Be back in about an hour." Luis said as all of Exodus--except for Gellar--walked out the door. "Wait, ALL of you?!?" The team leader asked. "Why not. WE don't have anything to do around here." The sniper answered. "What the fuck does that mean Walker?" Tom asked with a bit of indignance in his voice. Not answering, the Force Recon sniper simply closed the door behind him. "I'm off to bed you guys. See you in the morning." Melissa called from the top of the steps. "Shit girl, it's not even eight o'clock yet!!! You're THAT tired?!?" Gellar asked in a bit of shock. "Uhhh. . .yeah. . . mmmm. . .yep, really tired. Goo' night." The girl answered as she closed her bedroom door. Tom just sat there for a minute- shoulders slumped and blank look on his face. Christine came walking up the steps with a small basket of laundry. "Where'd everyone go? I heard some commotion and then it got real quiet." The FBI investigator asked. "My men decided to take a joyride and I think they took your car, sorry 'bout that." "What about Melissa?" "She said that she was 'really tired'--" The SEAL made quotation marks with his fingers as he said that. "--and went off to bed." "That's unusual. She never even consider's sleep until midnight." The woman stopped and looked down at herself. She was still wearing her office clothes and high heels. "Why don't I--" The agent began. "Slip into something more comfortable?" Tom answered. She just smiled and walked upstairs to her bedroom. Tom contemplated how many good porno films started with that line and smiled to himself. Moments later, Christine came padding down the steps wearing black cotton boxer shorts and a tiger-stripe camo t-shirt. "Sit down--" Tom said, waving her towards the couch. "--I'll be right back." Without any expression on his face, the Exodus Group leader took the bottle of red wine from the very back of Burchette's fridge. She accepted her glass with a smile, and he sat down next to her. Gellar--observing her expression--cocked his head slightly. "What's wrong?" He asked. "It's Melissa. Sending back in tomorrow. What if someone recognizes her? What if--" She quieted as the SEAL put one finger over her lips. "Everything is going to work out fine. We'll put her in tomorrow, take her out after about seventy-two hours, then we'll hit the cult with all we got." "By the way, they've got a name. Children of the Apocalypse. COTA for short." The agent injected. Tom nodded his head, and moved on in conversation. "How has she been handling life lately?" Gellar inquired, meaning Melissa. "Okay I guess. Occasional nightmares, minor depression but she always overcomes it in the end." Christine said. "What a trooper." Tom was glad to hear that she hadn't attempted to kill herself again. "She's missed you guys." "Us? You mean, the team?" The SEAL asked. The woman nodded and took another sip of wine. "We've been. . .well. . . busy

to say the least." That had just about drained Gellar's conversation right there. It had been awhile since he'd sat down with anyone like this. Not since his wife. Burchette took his empty wine glass- along with hers, and placed them in the kitchen sink. She came back and sat down on the couch again. This time, a bit closer to the SEAL than before. He wrapped an arm around her shoulders. she leaned in and placed a small kiss at the base of his neck. Melissa smiled at the two of them from the top of the steps.

9:04 P.M. EST Tom looked down. The FBI investigator was sleeping peacefully. As gently as possible, the warrior picked the woman up and began his ascent to the bedroom floor. He had made it into her room before she woke up. He put her down on the bed and started to walk away but she grabbed the back pocket of his dark blue jeans. Christine's face appeared to be sleeping, but she was definitely awake. "Sleep here tonight." She said. Gellar cleared his throat loudly and was a bit taken back. "Wh. . .whoa. . .wait a-" "Shhhh." Burchette blinked her eyes open and looked at him wearily. "All I said was sleep. And that was all I meant. Sleep." "So you weren't referring to-" The SEAL asked unsurely. "No, of course not." She answered. He paused. She rolled over and he moved onto the quilt next to her. Christine pulled one of his arms over her. Tom relaxed a bit and let himself drift into a relaxing sleep.

8:11 A.M. EST

Breakfast the next morning. Awkward. The first mistake of the morning was letting Melissa see the two of them come out of the bedroom together. She wasn't five- you couldn't shrug it off or explain it away. She was fourteen, a street kid- had a clue. When the two walked down into the kitchen, all of Exodus was having breakfast. "Help yourself guys." Christine said sarcastically. Behind her back, Paul flicked his tongue at Gellar with raised eyebrows. Tom shook his head and gave Moreno the finger. "What time you guys get back here last night?" The team leader asked. "'Bout eleven." Chris answered. The SEAL nodded. "What did you do to keep busy?" Vinny inquired with a sly smile. "Slept smart ass!" Tom said firmly. Luis got up and walked over to the fridge. While pulling out a quart of milk for himself, the sniper conspicuously slammed the half-empty wine bottle on the counter for the team to see. The Green Beret looked back at his Navy counterpart. Fed up- Tom pulled the condom out of his pocket and threw it at Moreno. Paul caught it and looked at his comrade with a surprised expression. "Happy now asshole?" The frogman mouthed silently to the swordsman. Christine turned around and everyone froze. "What?!?" She asked. No one answered. "Like a bunch of little kids." The FBI agent said while shaking her head and once again turning her back to the team. Moreno put both hands up in a "surrender" fashion. Tom just glared at him and went into the refrigerator for something to drink. "No orange juice? What's wrong with you woman?" Gellar asked with a chuckle. "We have to be at the airport for our flight at ten. So anything that's gotta be done- do it now." The agent warned. She had the same expression of worry as last night. Tom couldn't comfort her. Not here and not now. "I'm gonna take the girl shopping. Be back in about a half-hour." Chris said. Gellar looked at him suspiciously. He responded with a "what?!?" expression and walked out with Melissa.

"The Big K" Department store- Alexandria, VA 8:30 A.M. EST

"What are we doing?" Windsor asked. The Ranger didn't answer, he

simply told her to wait in the car. Ten minutes later, he came out with a small paper bag. Perry slid quietly into the car and held the bag low under the dash. She looked at the bag curiously. Chris put a hand in and drew out a small pistol. "A Colt Pony Pocketlite. You get six rounds of nine short." The soldier said. "What the fuck do I need to know that for?" The girl asked indifferently. "Because you're taking it with you." "Yeah, I'll just hide it in my ass or something." She said mockingly. "No, that'll ruin the gun. If you go that route, use the front of your underwear. It'll fit the pistol more comfortably and be less noticeable. You can use your bra too. I can show you if you want." Melissa looked into the warrior's eyes and realized that he wasn't kidding. The teenager succumb to the realization of what she was about to do--again--and breathed deeply once. "Okay. Teach me what I need, but let's find an alley or something first, alright?"

FBI Commuter Jet- En Route to New Castle, PA 10:34 A.M. EST

"No complimentary bag o' peanuts on this flight, eh?" Perry said in attempt to get a laugh from everyone. The tension was running high. Everyone was flashing back to the battle at the ranch house in Arizona. As Tom looked around, Chris caught his eye and the team leader walked over to the Ranger. "Where did you go this morning?" Gellar asked. "K-mart." "Why?" The SEAL's question went unanswered. Instead, Perry beckoned to Melissa who came nervously walking down the aisle to where the two warriors were standing. "Notice anything?" Chris asked. The Navy soldier looked the girl up and down. "Nope." Tom answered. "If you would Melissa." Perry said. The girl drew a Colt Pony .380 pistol. The Ranger began to explain. "She's got it hidden under the right side of her bra. She's southpaw, so I taught her how to trip the mag release with her left hand. She's got two spare mag-" The SEAL cut in. "I don't want to know where she's got those extra magazines." He then looked down at the girl. "Are you okay with this?" She nodded and walked away. The Group leader turned back to his electronics expert. "I oughtta break your fucking neck right here!" "What's your problem? I thought I was doing you a favor? I thought you'd want to see her prepared." Chris said in total shock of Gellar's reaction. Tom just turned and walked away. Perry blinked at the realization. "Whoa whoa, wait a second boss! I know why you're so damned pissed!" The SEAL came storming back in his direction and Chris continued. "You think I tried to put the moves on her don't you? I started out showing how to hide the gun and one thing lead to another and. . . shit man, didn't know you held me that low in your book! Especially after your little escapade in the RV-" Gellar lunged at the Ranger with all his force. Chris went down hard but before any punches could be exchanged, the other members of Exodus were over them. Moreno had Tom in a head lock and Vinson Gibb had restrained Chris with a Judo hold. Christine came running over to the commotion while signaling Windsor to stay behind. "What is going on here?" She asked with anger. "He thinks I'm trying to put the moves on your girl!" Perry said indignantly. "You try losing a kid and see how careless you are afterwards!" Tom shouted at the Ranger. The entire airplane went silent. Gellar shook out of Paul's grip and walked towards the front of the plane, sitting down a half-dozen rows away from everyone. Burchette just looked at the team. They too had become aware of the anxiety embedded within all of them.

Windsor shook her head. An outward sign the tension. What they felt could never come close to the emotion she was feeling right now. It was times like this that a hot bath and a razor blade sounded like

the perfect solution. The girl pushed that thought out of her head and looked at the Navy SEAL who was lost in thought and gazing out the window. He was the only man who could relate to her stress. For him, this was like losing another child. Whether he wanted to admit it or not, she and Christine had become the family that he'd lost. As quietly as possible, she sat in the seat next to him and put one arm over his stomach. Tom curled an arm around her shoulders and pulled her closer- as if she were a security blanket for the warrior. "He didn't do anything." Melissa said. "He was very gentle about the whole thing. Always asking me if I was comfortable with what he was showing me, or if I was getting self-conscious. With the life I've lead, modesty has never really been an issue for me." The girl admitted. Gellar looked down at her with glassy eyes. "I know. Chris is a good man. A heart of pure gold. It's just. . . ." Tom blinked and a single tear rolled down his left cheek. "I don't want to lose another one." Was all he could say, and barely above a whisper. The two held on to each other and contemplated what was about to happen.

The Freedmont Academy 11:05 A.M. EST

Only Gellar, Burchette and Windsor went into the school. Everyone waited in the Dodge van outside. Walker took notes concerning the campus while the others swapped assault strategies. There were three main components to the complex. First was the main academics building where classes were held from 8 A.M. until 2 P.M.,. Next was the dormitory hall, where all the students stayed. Finally, a third large building was the faculty quarters. This is where all the surviving members of the COTA cult stayed.

"Okay sweetie, we'll see you soon. Have fun." Christine said with mock joy. The SEAL and FBI agent clasped hands as Bruce Lorone walked Melissa off towards the dorm building. Now, the most anguishing seventy-two hours of either of their lives would begin.

Lorone handed the girl a single key on a string. "Room 608. Four doors down on your right. Take a look around. Settle in, whatever. You won't start classes until tomorrow. Be in the school auditorium around eight tonight though." He said as he walked away. Melissa located room 608 and walked in. The room was painted gray and decorated with all kinds of satanic icons and pictures. Black-and-white photos of animal sacrifices hung on the walls. There was a lone single bed in the far corner of the room. No TV, no radio or computer or telephone. The girl laid down on her bed and tried to fall asleep, abandoning all thought of where she was and why she was there.

3:17 P.M. EST

Windsor snapped awake as she heard the other children coming down the hallways to their rooms. Getting up, she went across the hall to room 607 and knocked on the door. The door opened slightly and Melissa could see another girl. "Hi, I just came here this morning and am trying to meet everyone. Can I come in for a minute?" The other girl swung the door open and let Melissa in. "I've only been here a week myself. Courtney Braton." The girl said as she put out a hand for Windsor to shake. Courtney was a bit taller than Melissa--just under five foot eight-- with flowing dark brown hair and almond colored eyes, a bit lanky in build. "What happened to you?" Windsor asked, spotting the bruises on Courtney's upper arms. "One of the teacher's

probably. It happens so often I don't even care anymore." The girl said with resignation. "It's that bad after only a week?" Melissa asked with shock. Braton just hung her head low. "It happened about a month ago now. They stormed my house and shot my parents. I escaped and was living on the streets for three weeks. They caught me about five days ago and brought me here." She said. "Why did they come after you so aggressively?" Windsor inquired. "Because my older brother was one of these guys. He got killed out in Arizona and they thought I would take his place. When I refused, they hunted me like an animal." Now Courtney was in tears and sobbing. "Don't worry Courtney. I'll get you out of here. I promise." Melissa said firmly, discreetly patting the Pony Pocketlite. hidden under her bra.

4:51 P.M. EST Fred Shefts sat on his couch and closed his eyes. How it all began he thought to himself. About twelve years ago, when he was only fifteen. The kids would call him a "faggot" even though he had a girlfriend. The jocks would beat him up after school for no reason. Fred got sick of it. That's when he realized that society had become so corrupt and so flawed that normal people could never live happily within its borders. He formed the Children of the Apocalypse. A small group of young kids who had been groundlessly rejected by this flawed caste system. Together, they would reform the world so that all were equal- as God had meant it to be. But God's plan had failed in Shefts eyes. It was then that he turned to the dark prince. The one who truly ruled the greedy demons that most called the leaders of the world. By praising Satan and doing his work of destruction, Lucifer might one day rise them. Giving all of these scarred children a chance to exact eternal revenge. Then, disaster struck. The Feds had located the ranch house. After COTA lost ninety per cent of its following, the backup plan went into effect. Fred started the Freedmont Academy. Already the school was booming. Bringing in funds and followers. The COTA leader thought about the upcoming night. A new member or two tonight. The man smiled to himself and fell into a restful state.

8:02 P.M. EST

The "gathering" was surreal. About forty kids--predominantly female--sitting Indian style in a circle around a large candle in the face of a gargoyle. The wax was blood red. One man stood in the center of the circle, legs spread apart over the candle. He was holding a large book bound in pewter or some other grayish metal. Two other men walked slowly around the group. Like hawks circling prey. They toted large, heavily carved bamboo poles. Man number one in the middle opened the book and began to read in something which sounded like Latin. He then stopped and seemed to reread the same excerpt in English. It was something about the almighty prince returning to Earth to save only those who do his work. After reciting a page like this, he stopped. Held the large book over his head and shouted. "HILE DIABLO!" Then one of the other pair stepped behind Courtney and swung the bamboo cane hard. The stick impacted hard on her right shoulder. She screamed in agony. "HILE DIABLO!" The second man walked up behind a boy and drove the pole like a stake into the base of the young man's neck. As before, he screamed and sobbed. "HILE DIABLO!" The first man struck at another girl. He hit so hard that she slumped forward and didn't sit up. The man used the "stake drive" maneuver to slam the end of the bamboo stick into the base of her spine. There was a crack and she fell over into the lap of another boy. Again, the book was opened and the Latin recited and re-recited in English. Two pages this time. Also again, he raised the book high and began to

chant. "HILE DIABLO!" This time one man lifted the cane over his head and drove it into a young girls back. She was only 12 or so. She was flung onto her stomach and rushed to return to Indian position. "HILE DIABLO!" Man number two hoisted his weapon like a baseball bat and cracked Melissa in the left side of the rib cage. Windsor bit her lip and drew blood but refused to scream. "HILE DIABLO!" The same man swung the cane hard against Melissa's right side. The butt of the Colt pistol drove like a dagger into the girl's torso. She winced and inhaled in short breaths. Relentlessly however, she refused to surrender to the pain. The center man read again as both guards lined up behind Windsor. "HILE DIABLO!" This time both guards hit at Melissa's body. One pole hit the right shoulder and the other one impacted the left side of her head. Blood was staining her right sleeve. Crimson liquid streamed like water from her chin. A haze of blackness crept into Windsor's world. "HILE DIABLO!" Only one impact this time. To the kidney- pain was too great to discern which one. Windsor's eyelids drooped and she began to see bits of her life in front of her. Then she saw Tom and Christine and sat up erect- snapping her eyes open. "HILE DIABLO!" One cane sent a white-hot pain through both shoulder blades. The second blow--delayed by two seconds--slammed the girl's skull once again. A shade of iridescent overcame all of Melissa's vision and she felt herself fall backward onto the tile floor.

9:28 P.M.

Melissa moaned softly. "Welcome back." Courtney said. "I've been under how long?" Windsor asked. "You were under for about ten minutes solid. The rest of the time you've just been fading in and out." Braton answered. Melissa nodded slightly. The brown-haired sixteen year old kept talking. "So how old are you?" She asked. "Fourteen." "Wow, you're two years younger than me. And you took punishment like that?" Courtney was shocked. "Do me a favor?" Windsor asked. "Sure." "Put one hand on each of my shoulders and push in as hard as you can." This was a trick that Christine had taught her. Braton did as asked and jumped when the right shoulder seemed to "give way" and make a popping noise. Melissa gritted her teeth for a few seconds. "What did I do?" Courtney asked. "Relocated my right shoulder. I got a few bruised ribs on either side, that shoulder was dislocated, and probably concussion. I have another few minutes before I start puking my guts out." Braton put a small bucket next to Melissa's bed in case that happened. Windsor lifted up her right arm and looked at Courtney again. "Reach under my bra. I need to check something." Courtney hesitated but did so and went wide-eyed when she drew the .380 pistol from underneath Melissa's shirt. She grabbed the gun from Braton's hands and racked the slide. "Still works too." Windsor said with a smile. "What are you doing with that?" "All I can tell you is that you're gonna get out of here in a few days, I promise. Now go back to your room and get some rest." Following Melissa's request, Courtney turned and walked out. "I hope they don't gather nightly." Windsor said to herself with a tone of despair. The girl then began to sob moments before leaning over the pale to vomit.

FBI Headquarters- Washington D.C. 10:46 A.M. EST (48 Hours Later)

"Captain Regg, meet Tom Gellar. He runs the specialty unit that's been tracking the cult. Tom, this is captain James Regg of HRT." Burchette said in the ever buisness-like tone. The men shook hands and sat down at a small conference table. "To my understanding, you

have people undercover in there?" James asked. "Don't worry about that. They'll exfiltrate tomorrow night. We strike the next night at five-hundred hours." Gellar answered. "Good. Then we'll just surround the place. Cut power and hit 'em with spotlights. Let the boys sweat and then send in a team from the south and from the north, right?" Regg said in an attempt to impress the SEAL. "Actually, we'll have a better strategy formed within another two days. By then, more photos and inside intelligence will be available." The Hostage Rescue Team nodded in agreement. "How many men do you think we're going to need?" Christine asked. "I figure five men from HRT to one Unit fighter." Tom answered. "Who are you guys anyway?" Regg asked. "Sorry sir, but that's above your pay grade." The SEAL responded enigmatically. Just then, Tom's beeper went off. "I'm apologize, but we have to leave." Burchette said. The two stood up and walked out. They would meet again ASAP.

"What do you think?" The FBI woman asked. "Two things. One, HRT is out of it's league. Two, I'm going to extract Melissa tonight." "I can understand about HRT. They are not an offensive unit, but you need them anyway. But why extract Melissa tonight?" Christine inquired. "We'll have enough info by now. You know I've had my men staking out that school since we put her in. All the photos they took coupled with the bit that Windsor knows will be enough to launch an op." Gellar responded. "You're going in by yourself?" "No, but I'm not taking my men either. If the cult knows they are being staked and notice that no team is on duty, they'll flip. I have another idea but I need a phone." "My office is down the hall. It's a secure line." Burchette answered.

Christine escorted her partner to the fourth floor- where her office was. Tom sat down in her chair and picked up the handset. "Some privacy please?" Gellar more said than asked. She closed the door and stood outside. The SEAL punched in a few digits. "Hello?" A voice on the other end greeted. "Is the fed there?" "Hold please." A short pause. "Yes?" A male voice answered. "Hal, it's Tom Gellar. From Six." "Oh, hey Tom. How is everything?" "Okay. Remember when I did you that favor a few years back? Yeah, the one on the oil rig in the Adriatic. I'm calling in the return favor."

"Tino's Bar&Grill"- Washington D.C. 12:34 P.M. EST

Tom sat alone in the eatery, just through his second Coca-Cola when the favor appeared. Even in the large lunch crowd, Gellar could spot him. The six foot three Green Beret seemed to float through the crowd and slide into the booth across from the Exodus Group leader. They shook hands as the waitress brought him a soft-drink. "So why am I here?" The warrior asked. "I need your help on an exfil. We're pulling out an undercover operative. We won't talk here though. Let's find a safer area." Tom said. Paying for the drinks, the pair of fighters walked out of Tino's and into the backseat of a black Suburban which was waiting for them. Gellar shut the car door and Paul Moreno leaned over the back of the seat. "Paul, I want you to meet an associate and friend of mine. You might know him. He used to be Special Forces too." Gellar said. The Exodus swordsman raised an eyebrow and extended his hand. "Paul Moreno." The man in the backseat returned the gesture. "Mack Bolan."

CIA Safe House- New Castle, PA 1:58 P.M. EST

"You wanna make a big bang tonight?" Bolan asked. "Not at all. We

slip her out quietly. Our party's gonna be tomorrow night." Tom answered. "You have a photo?" The SEAL drew a wallet sized photo of Windsor for Mack to study. "She's a nice looking girl." The Green Beret commented. "Only wish she was mine. Feds picked her up off the streets. She's the daughter I never had and the son I lost." Gellar responded. Mack nodded. He knew what that pain was like. "I'd say a silenced machine pistol or subgun would be adequate. I don't intend to get noticed but you always be prepared." Tom said. Bolan patted his suppressed Beretta and companion Desert Eagle. Tom said he would tote his Boxer .45 and a suppressed MP5K-PDW. "She doesn't know we're coming? That might be a problem." The SF veteran pointed out. Though well Gellar's senior in years, Mack still held high respect for the SEAL. His eyes and demeanor were those of a true warrior with a pure heart. "She knows we're coming. She just doesn't know we are showing up early. Don't worry about that. Though. . . we should carry some medical supplies in case she's been given a warm welcome." The Exodus leader answered. "If that's everything, I'd suggest that we grab all the sleep we can until everyone else comes back. We'll be staying up way past our bedtimes tonight." Mack said with a hint of a smile.

The Freedmont Academy- New Castle, PA 4:39 P.M. EST

"Closing time in ten minutes." Perry said. The rest of Exodus had been tasked with staking out the school. Two vans placed strategically across the street from the school sat there twenty-four hours a day. At five o' clock, the soldiers sneak out the back of their vehicles and walk two blacks to their real cars- the ones used to move around town. Then they would drive back to the safe house for the night and assess the pictures and information collected. "Something's wrong man." Walker warned. Chris perked up. "What?!?" "I haven't seen our girl's face all day. That makes two days in a row. Something's fucked up about that deal." "Should we call boss man Gellar?" Chris inquired. "They're going to pick her up tonight. He doesn't need anymore hassles. Put it down in the report. Don't radio in, not unless we see anything. Just pray to God that they haven't found her out." The Marine sniper replied.

The Freedmont Academy- New Castle, PA 12:48 A.M. EST

The two commandos scaled the chain-link fence with ease. In a low crouch, the two jogged across the school building's front lawn. About a football field's length behind the school building were two clusters of smaller buildings. A twin set of long, single level dormitories. Then three large duplex houses for the faculty- the cult leaders. Tom had watched Melissa walk into the front of the girls' dorm just a few days ago. "Split. You take the left side, I'll go right." Gellar said. Bolan walked around the left side of the building and peered in all of the windows with his AN/PVS-4 night vision goggles. None of the faces looked familiar, but the warrior was sure to check EVERY window.

Melissa lay quietly in her bed when the door creaked open. Opening her eyes as much as possible, Windsor still could not make out the form of the person in the doorway. "Courtney?" The girl called softly. No answer. The large shadow only moved closer. "You know you're a very good looking girl." A male whisper said. Melissa jerked as a large hand rested on the inside of her upper thigh. The second hand pressed firmly on her right shoulder, sending a jolt of pain through the teen. "Fuck you." She said in a hoarse voice. That hand

only moved another four inches up her thigh, now coming to rest over the zipper of her jeans. "That's no way to respect your elders young lady." The grim whisper taunted through the darkness. Windsor threw one knee hard into the man's back. She heard a grunt and smiled. "I was trying to be nice about things. . ." He said through gritted teeth. Standing up (from his former position of sitting on the edge of Melissa's bed), the cult's man now held the girl down by her throat. With no consideration to comfort anymore, he began to roughly unbutton Melissa's jeans. She let out a moan and ceased to provide any further struggle. The man only worked faster now with her Levi's zipper.

That sound! Bolan skipped over the next three windows and peered in. It was Tom's girl. Someone was getting frisky with her too. "Room 608, go through the door!" Mack said into the Motorola boom mike. While Gellar circled around, Mack pried the window lock silently with his Applegate-Fairbane fighting knife. There was a barely audible "pop" as the lock gave way. Giving one more look, the Green Beret could see that whoever was overpowering the teen was making progress. Those dark blue jeans had slid halfway down her thighs. Rage filling his heart instantly, the warrior tore off his NVGs and flung the window up. Before even he had a chance to act, a loud shot went off.

Windsor had worked the Pony out from under her shirt and capped a round. The .380 slug smashed through the cult leader's neck. The girl lay there as blood splashed over her. Another squeeze of the trigger sent a hollow point bullet smashing into his collarbone. The man staggered back two steps. "You bitch!" He yelled silently. She aimed again but held fire as another form came rolling in through her window.

The SEAL sent three 9mm manglers into the wooden door. The lock fell to the ground and Tom shouldered the door open. As quickly as possible Gellar shuffled down the hallway with MP-5 at ready. Door 608 leapt into his field of view. Another trio of stealth slugs chewed the doorknob to Windsor's room. The door flung open and the Exodus soldier paused for a split second to take in the horror that was about to belay the girl. Gellar held back on his fire. Mack had leapt in the window. There was a small glint of light and a grunt as the stainless steel AF blade punctured the tango's lung. The man continued to struggle. Tom leveled the PDW and fired three rounds. Silence. Bolan took a step towards Windsor to help her with her jeans. The fighter stopped and looked at Gellar. Immediately, Tom removed his goggles and stepped in to help Melissa. "Courtney." The girl whispered. "Who?" The SEAL asked. "Across the hall. Room 607. Go get her please." "I'm on it." Bolan said as he walked out. Tom turned to the girl. Tears were streaming down her face and neck. For a half second they embraced. "C'mon, let's get you outta here." He said. Windsor stood up and rebuttoned her jeans. "What happened to you?" The SEAL asked, noting her wounds and difficulty in moving. "Oh, nothing,, just a bit of a caning." She said with false humor. Tom could feel the air in his lungs burning with anger.

Braton gasped as the 6'3" man shadowed her doorway. "It's ok, I'm here to take you out of here." Mack said. The girl still expressed suspicion. "I'm here for Melissa too." It was that comment that suppressed Courtney's disbelief. She stood up and followed the commando out of the small room. Suddenly, flood lights went on all up and down the hallway. The two warriors winced as the NVGs overloaded.

Again, the AN/PVS-4s were removed. "Fuck! We've been compromised! You wanna pop the champagne early?" Bolan asked. "Let's do it! You get the girls out of here. I'll initiate contingency plan!" Tom yelled. Mack took the girls and exited through the window. Gellar turned on his microphone. "Moreno! Burchette! We've been found! Send in Calvary! Out!" The SEAL said into the radio. Within seconds, 20 men from HRT and the rest of Exodus was storming the compound. Two teams of five HRT men--led by two members of Exodus--would hit the main school building. Another pair of 5 man HRT squads--led by the last two members of Exodus--would storm the dormitories. Bolan and Gellar would hit the faculty houses by themselves. Mack came running back with a duffel bag. "Let's do it!"

The bag was more weapons. Mack had his M4-A1 Ranger Carbine. Tom Gellar was bringing a Remington 10gauge "Special Purpose" magnum shotgun. The two went sprinting towards the faculty buildings. Three men met them with Hi-Point 9mm Carbines. "Fuck society!" One shouted. "Fuck you!" Tom taunted back with two blasts of 3.5inch 10gauge. Twenty #00 buckshot pellets shredded the man who'd made the battle call. The other two opened up with the 9mm rifles. Bolan loosed eight rounds of .223 FMJ slugs. The mini-manglers tore a gaping hole in the chest of another shooter. The last simply screamed and swallowed one of his own slugs.

Moreno "bum rushed" the main entrance to the school building. The gave way easily. Two guards with Bushmaster M17S Carbines stood up. Moreno greased one with a trio of .44 mag skull crushers. The other was quickly dispatched with a swipe of phosphate black titanium. The HRT men spread out and shuffled down the hallways. Gibb walked into the nurses office where yet another armed guard was hiding. A 12round string from an MP-5 sent that sentry into the wall.

Tom stalked up the steps of duplex #1. There were orders and swears traveling through the air of the upper levels. Reaching the top of the steps, Gellar turned right and walked into a bedroom. One woman tried desperately to load her Weatherby Athena shotgun. With two shells in place, she snapped the action closed and spun to face Gellar. A lone 10gauge shell sent her back into the wall. The SEAL could hear the footsteps behind. Lowering the Remington, Tom shot the butt stock directly behind him. There was a crack and a grunt. Pivoting, the soldier was confronted with a crazed worshiper who'd sliced open the vein in his forearm. The man was speaking in Latin about the dark prince being his salvation. The muzzle of the shotgun found its mark and Gellar pulled. Nothing. Just a hammer on an empty chamber. Flipping the weapon, Tom used the barrel like a handle and swung. The cult follower's jaw shattered under the impact of the reinforced fiberglass. To finish, he drew the Boxer and placed a 165grain Cor-Bon into the tango's heart.

Bolan paused when he heard the engines start. Leaving the wounded cult fighter on the ground, Mack took off after the trio of large vans. Dropping to one knee, the SF warrior fired off bursts of 5.56mm brass. Two of the rounds drove home through the chest of a van driver. The vehicle toppled and exploded. A blazon fireball lit the night. Emptying the remaining twenty rounds, Bolan had no luck in stopping the other two vans. Sighting a quick solution, Bolan looked at his weapon. he knew that Tom was in house one and houses 2 and 3 were free of hostages. The warrior plucked an HE round off his vest and slammed it home- into the breach of his M203.

Perry led the way and slammed open every dorm door he could. Frightened cries leaked from all of the portals. Two shots came from the darkness ahead. Chris dove but one of the HRT commandos took the round in the shoulder. The Ranger leveled his L-R 300 and punctured the gunman's head twice with a pair of 5.56mm NATO slugs. "No! I don't wanna go! The government is evil!!!" A teenager shouted from one of the dorm rooms. "Shit, I'll take care of that." Walker said. A few seconds later the sniper came walking out of the room. Perry looked at him. "Sleeper hold." Luis said. Chris just smiled and nodded as he pumped a baker's dozen of lead shredders into a devil-worshipping tango.

Melissa and Courtney sat close to each other in the Suburban. While thunderous gun battles took place before her eyes, Windsor spotted a Dodge van pulling away from the school. In a bold move, the girl leaned out the window and fired the remaining four rounds of her Colt Pony. Three of the rounds wounded a passenger but the van continued to speed away.

"You g-men can't kill us all! There are far too many of us for you to handle!" The terrorist said to Tom Gellar, who was standing over him. "Fuck you. This is it, the ball stops here. Game over." The SEAL said coldly. "Over half of the American population follows our ways!" The bleeding man shouted. "And so what if that's so?" Bolan said from the shadows. "-We'll hit you so fast, so hard and from so many directions that you'll think your beloved hell has caved in on you." "My dark prince, savior. He will protect me. HILE DIABLO!" The satanist shouted. "Remember Littleton mother fucker?" The SEAL asked as he double tapped the Remington's trigger. Blood and flesh sprayed up into Tom's face. "A few from duplex three got away. I got anyone who didn't though." Mack said, explaining the 40mm explosion from a few minutes back. Gellar nodded as he wiped his face clean with no remorse. The Green Beret thought back to his days like that. When watching the blood of your mortal enemies spilled gave you a twinge of gothic pleasure. All you wanted was to destroy those who hurt your family. Mack could relate all too well. There was a shot from upstairs. Both soldiers walked up to investigate. Christine Burchette was standing over a corps- Colt 635 9mm in hand. "There's another five on the top floor. I can hear them. The FBI agent said. Suddenly, footsteps came pounding down from above. The agent leveled her carbine and loosed an extended burst. Twenty-one 9mm JHPs went crashing into a pair of cult's men trying to escape. Glass shattered as another tried to jump. Mack went out the back door to catch that one. Tom and Christine stalked up the stair together side by side. Both reached into their vests for spare magazines. Coincidentally, both were out of ammo. Burchette drew her P226 and Tom his Boxer. "You will die!" A worshiper shouted from off to the left. Both spun and put 6 rounds into the body. The tango staggered backward and fell as a pool of crimson formed quickly. A second later, another armed figure appeared in the bathroom doorway down the hall to the right. Christine slammed the SEAL to the wall and double-tapped twice. The woman wielding a SUB-9 rifle slid down the plaster. "Burchette?" A voice asked through the radio. "Yeah?" "We've rounded up all the kids. All threats encountered have been neutralized. "It's over?" The FBI agent asked unsurely. "Roger that ma'am. We did it." Captain Regg said. "Copy that. Thank you captain." She said, turning off the radio. Christine looked at Tom. Her eyes welled up with tears. Taking a stride, the SEAL wrapped both arms around her as she let out a long sob.

"Did you hear that?!?" Courtney asked with excitement. The girls had heard the whole battle through the radio scanner in the truck. Both of the teens screamed with joy and hugged each other.

CIA Safe House- New Castle, PA 7:26 P.M. EST (8 Days Later)

It was a peaceful evening. Just a week after the horrifying experience of going back undercover. . Courtney, Melissa, Christine and Tom all sat on the safe house large watching week night television in the upstairs TV room. Suddenly, the building erupted into a festival of lead and cordite. The front door shattered and a group of six cult's men stormed in. They were carrying AR-15 rifles. Melissa dove behind the couch and began an infantry crawl towards the back of the apartment. Braton--not realizing exactly what was going on--did the same. Burchette and Gellar--packing only their sidearms--began to maneuver using every bit of cover available. Gellar tuck-and-rolled to dodge a burst of 5.56mm fire. He came up in a genuflecting position, Boxer .45 roaring slug after slug of powerful .45 at the enemy. He ran to the rear of the apartment as Christine laden the air with ammo out of her Sig P226. "I'm scared! We're trapped!" Courtney screamed over the auto fire. Tom glanced around and found his answer. Slamming a fresh magazine into his pistol, the SEAL shout out the sliding double-doors leading to the 2nd story balcony. From the hall, Burchette saw this and retreated into the bedroom. Seconds later, she emerged with three large bed sheets which she promptly tied end-to-end. When finished, she went on hands and knees while AR-15 and Boxer bullets swapped paths over her back. Gellar gave the FBI agent his weapon and took the sheet. Using both pistols, the woman provided suppressive fire to the front of the apartment. "Wha. . . what are you doing?" The Braton asked her guardian. He swung the sheet over the edge of the balcony and looked at her. "C'mon!!! Get the fuck out of here!!!" He yelled. In fear of her life, Courtney swung over the edge. "Now you." Tom said- looking at Windsor. "I can't leave you!" She protested. Fire died down and Burchette came up from behind her. "You have to!!! We can handle ourselves!! Now go!!!" Tears started to stream down Melissa's cheeks. She shook her head vigorously. Finally Tom slung her in a fireman's carry and walked her out onto the wood balcony. He wrapped the end of the sheet-ropes around her waist. "Now go! We'll meet you at Holy Hills. Row forty-two plot twelve. . say hi to Adam for m-" The SEAL's sentence was cut off as he yelled. Melissa's eyes widened and she began to sob. Christine gasped as she noted the blood spilling from Gellar's torso. "I love you." She said. "I love you too." He answered, shoving her over the edge. He paused. "Tom?" "Let's fuck 'em over while we still can!" Gellar said grimly. She tossed his pistol back to him. He still had 20 rounds left for the Boxer. She had 18 for the 9mm P226. The two began to walk down the hall spraying lead into the air hitting every cult's man that they aimed at. One sprang up from behind and drove a small dagger into Gellar's bullet wound. He turned around and snapped the man's neck. The duo proceeded to walk down the hall, screaming obscenities at every target. In the middle of a curse, Tom collapsed. "Get up! There's only two left! You can do it!" The FBI agent said as she too started to weep. The Exodus warrior forced himself to his feet and began to walk down the hall. Gellar fed the last decade of Cor-Bon slugs into his Enterprise pistol. Burchette peered into the bathroom and spotted one of the last duo of men. He was trying to light the faulty fuse of a home made pipe bomb. The agent triple-tapped and sent the 9mm JHPs drilling into the tango's body. The last shooter ran at Tom head-on, wielding his empty assault rifle like a club. Out of pure anger, he

emptied all ten rounds into the head and upper chest of Bruce Lorone. Gellar fell to his knees and grasped at his side. Christine rushed for the phone but could already hear sirens in the distance.

"Friendly's Ice Cream Shoppe"- Alexandria, VA 2:01 P.M. EST (3 weeks later)

The three stood in the entrance to the shop enjoying their ice cream. Melissa with a cup of Rocky Road, Courtney a cone of Cookie Dough and Tom- a cup of rainbow sherbet. "Too bad Christine couldn't be here." Melissa commented. "Yeah, I know. FBI life sucks when you realize that it's just another office." Gellar said with a smile. Tom's car was parked right outside the ice cream parlor. The trio began to make their way towards the car when Gellar made a snap decision. "I'm gonna call her. Be right back." The two girls--still emotionally scarred--followed him. As the SEAL picked up the handset, Friendly's exploded. The entire store front was leveled and Gellar's car was sent barrel rolling into the street. Shortly afterwards, a man on a motorcycle with a Skorpion machine pistol rode by shooting at the two girls. Tom drew the Boxer .45 and fired once. . . twice. . . three. . . four. . . five. . . six. . . seven times. Fred Shefts flailed as the rounds crunched the biker's helmet along with his skull. The motorcycle went out of control and slammed into their overturned car which exploded- incinerating bike and rider. Local PD cars came speeding into the parking lot as people screamed, took pictures, or called 911.

Alexandria Courthouse- Alexandria, VA 4:34 P.M. EST (2 weeks later)

"Are you ready?" The judge asked. Both of them nodded. "Witnesses?" The judge checked. Tom hooked his thumb towards the other members of Exodus as well as the two girls. After a short greeting, Tom--in full Navy dress uniform--looked down at the small scrap of paper and read the vows. Christine--who was wearing a light pink business suit--did the same thing when her time came. Melissa handed the pair their rings. After putting the rings on each other, the judge made the announcement. "I now pronounce you man and wife." A light round of applause arose from Exodus. The two thanked the judge and left the chambers with their friends. Outside the courthouse, the team made a small circle around the two girls. "What's going on?" Courtney asked suspiciously. Burchette drew a pair of standard legal envelopes from her purse and handed one to each girl. Both opened the letters cautiously and scanned the print. "Letters of adoption?!?!" Windsor yelled in exclamation. Gellar smiled and nodded. She threw her arms around the SEAL and soaked his dress blues with tears of joy. Christine looked at Courtney who was still in shock. The girl wrapped her arms around the FBI agent and repeated to thank the woman. All of Exodus and a number of curious onlookers began to applaud. Mack Bolan just stood and smiled in awe of the Exodus Group leader. Happy and envious at the same time.

The End!

I dedicate this story to Mega and D- ya guys were always there. Thank You.

End

file.